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ELI
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My Journey as a Leader

Once again, another semester has flown by, but it's a different kind of semester. This semester I actually had a class that I wouldn't mind going to each day of my college career. The Emerging Leader Institute isn't just a sit down lecture class, it's an interactive two hours devoted to your benefit throughout the semester and your life.

During the course of ELI, I became a much stronger and more effective leader. Each seminar was filled with useful information that would help guide us throughout our college years and the years to come thereafter. I thought leadership was a trait that either came natural to some people or just didn't exist at all in others, but now I have a different perspective. Natural leadership is always handy. My ability to have confidence in myself and not be afraid to tell others how to improve themselves was something God gave me. ELI has taught me so many more characteristics that I do have as a leader and that I can gain even if they don't come natural to me.

I really appreciated the seminar on using your assets. I always knew that having "connections" was a good thing, but I never realized how important they really are. Not only should you use your assets, you must gain as many as possible. Being surrounded with leaders in this class who were interested in helping each other blessed me with many more contacts leading me to more assets. I heard so many times throughout the year that your individual project should be something that you are passionate about and comfortable with. Everybody said my project would be more successful if I were to work with the people I loved doing the things I loved. I knew I wanted a harder challenge, though. This led me to my idea with working at the jail. It is something I'm passionate about, but it's definitely not something I'm best at. So I did get to use some of my assets such as my compassion and ability to speak honestly with others, but I know I could have used more if I was able to volunteer at Ashland Terrace. I'm eager to see how my project goes in a few weeks because I know it will be even more rewarding after stepping out of my comfort zone.

A lesson that I was shocked to learn was that, it is okay to have conflict. Conflict can even make things better for a leader in the future. Conflict opens up your eyes to make you view all standpoints and where those beliefs are coming from. Before ELI, I was very close minded. I'm embarrassed to say it, but it's true. If I would have heard the term conflict, I would have ran or avoided the situation. I know now I will become a smarter person by facing conflict. I also am proud to say that I've learned that I'm not always the right one. That was another bad habit of mine. This lecture made me realize that there can be more than just one right answer. I learned it's okay to incorporate several ideas from several different people. In the end, the people will be happier, and the solution will be stronger. This is a very key point that not only emerging leaders should understand, but high leaders as of now should definitely pursue this.

I am most proud of myself for constructing my own leadership project and presenting it to my classmates. If I would have known I had to do this before I entered the class, I probably wouldn't have signed up for it. I'm the leader that is usually just given a task and completes it on my own no matter what. I had never organized a project of my own. I wouldn't say it was because I didn't have the talent to do it, I just didn't have confidence that I could do something on that level. Now that I'm more knowledgeable and comfortable as a leader in different settings, I am excited to create new projects and get others involved, as well. By seeing the improvement in myself as a leader, I am really impressed with ELI. When we took the personality questionnaire at the beginning of the year, I wasn't surprised

to hear that I wasn't a very dominant leader. In a group of followers, I love stepping up. However, in a group of leaders, I am much more passive. Being in a class surrounded by strong leaders was very intimidating for me at first, but now I know that my ideas are just as good as theirs and I am just as qualified to design my own project as they are. Being surrounded with so many leaders was a nice challenge. It has made me stronger and much more confident in myself and my ideas.

ELI urged me to get even more involved with the University. It was also handy to have so many updates and announcements in the class for all of the leadership opportunities. I wanted to help with PAW last semester, but I didn't apply early enough because I didn't know it was even out there. However, with the many reminders in class for the PAW opportunity, I definitely took advantage and applied. I had to construct a resume which was new for me and felt confident in myself and my credentials. After a troublesome week of many interruptions and doctors appointments, I was informed that I got the position. I was so excited to hear those words because it is something I am passionate about and feel that I will be an asset to PAW. I also applied to work at the Visitor Center in the Student Center which I am still unaware of the results. I love interacting with people and actually being genuine and honest which is something I could definitely do with visitors at UK. Once again, I was more confident about my application when turning it in that I would have been if I had to have applied last semester before taking ELI. The interview process was actually a bit scary for me. I wish I had already given my presentation to the class in ELI before I had to attend this interview. Speaking in front of a class in college was a first for me. It was no big deal in high school, but it is kind of intimidating for me in college. I know this sounds stupid, but it makes me so mad when people point out my "accent from Eastern Kentucky." If they were just curious about it, things would be fine. Most people, however, seem to go on and on about it like they've never heard anything like that in their lives. Trust me, it doesn't sound like a positive compliment. After making friends in ELI and being more comfortable with myself and my speaking talent, I learned it wasn't so bad to speak in front of others in college. I'm thinking that I was more at ease because I knew everybody there supported me and my idea, but in an interview it's like everyone is against you since you're all going for the gold. ELI has taught me how to speak properly in front of others with sincerity and keep my audience attentive and engaged throughout the whole speech. This will definitely be useful in interview to come in the future. Hopefully, what I learned from ELI shown through my interview and gave others the understanding of my leadership and the polishing I've had on it this semester.

There are so many opportunities that I would love to take advantage of at UK and so many more after I graduate. ELI has urged me to take full advantage of all these leadership positions. The College of Nursing is filled with many positions and projects that I would love to get involved with and someday be in charge. I have a long road ahead of me when it comes to school. After UK, I plan to attend graduate school to become a nurse anesthetist. It's too bad UK doesn't offer this program, but hopefully what I've learned here will have me well prepared for my new adventure. It will take a lot of hard work and an impressive resume to get accepted into a graduate school such as one of these. I know my hard work and dedication will be there, and after ELI, I'm sure I'm prepared to take positions and make an impressive resume. The knowledge that someone holds isn't worth a lot if he or she doesn't know how to apply it to the real world and real people. My future career has me interacting with tons of different people and different situations which I know I'm prepared for. As a nurse, there are so many options available. Not only does the working with patients interest me, but being part of boards and committees is something that also excites me. I can't wait to be sitting at a

huge round table surrounded by top doctors and authorities with a coffee in one hand and a briefcase in front of me and know that they all respect and think highly of my opinions. I know it sounds kind of dorky like something you see on tv, but I really see that in my future. I love having an influence on decisions and even others opinions, and I know my leadership skills from ELI will definitely be something people will notice in the future. They may not know where I developed these skills or how long they have existed, but I will.

I am very impressed with all that I have learned in ELI and how I've actually already been able to apply much of what I have learned. I will have to say that without the techniques I have learned from ELI, I don't know if I ever would have been this effective as a leader. Some people may not have been scared of the syllabus or the activities we were to be in charge of, but I was. I'm proud to say I have overcome my fears and accomplished much more than I would have ever expected, and I appreciate all the suggestions, effort, and hard work of my peers and instructors.